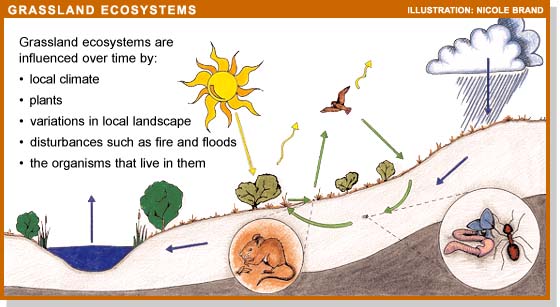
**Grasslands Ecosystems**



**Grassland Ecosystems**

**Ecological Systems (ecosystems)** consist of all the living organisms in an area and their physical environment (soil, water, air).

**Ecosystems** are influenced over time by the local climate, the parent material under the plants, variations in the local landscape, disturbances such as fire and floods, and by the organisms that live in them.

**Grassland ecosystems** in British Columbia generally occur in areas where the climate is hot and dry in summer and cool to cold and dry in winter. The parent material is often composed of fine sediments, and grasslands are most often in valley or plateau landscapes. The organisms that live in them include plants and animals that have adapted to the dry climatic conditions in a variety of ways.

Differences in elevation, climate, soils, aspect, and their position in relation to mountain ranges have resulted in many variations in the grassland ecosystems of British Columbia. The mosaics of ecosystems found in our grasslands, including wetlands, riparian areas, aspen stands and rocky cliffs, allow for a rich diversity of species.

Some grassland plants, such as grasses, have many long, fine roots to search for water at and just below the surface; others, such as big sagebrush, have long tap roots that penetrate deep below the surface to find water. Many animals migrate or dig burrows underground for protection and to avoid cold winter or hot summer temperatures.